

April 15, 1965

Mr. Warren E. Preece  
Editor  
Encyclopaedia Britannica  
425 North Michigan Avenue  
Chicago 11, Illinois

Dear Mr. Preece:

In your letter of April 9 you raised a very important issue, but on some reflection I doubt that there can be such a simple solution. Eugenics has been a controversial issue, but it is not a simple one, and I doubt that there are very many people who could be described as pure proponents or opponents. In fact, probably almost anyone who has commented on the field regards himself as a very balanced reviewer, and indeed while hardly two people can be found with exactly the same views, there is a very considerable overlap of opinion which will make it very difficult to classify the protagonists. These considerations may not impair the essential vitality of your interesting scheme, but I think it important not to oversimplify the labels attached to the participants.

The best suggestion that I could make would be to have a cluster of articles which would include a reasonably non-controversial statement of the biological basis, and for this I could strongly commend either James V. Neel or James F. Crow, at the Universities of Michigan and Wisconsin, respectively. I then feel you might well ask Julian Huxley or H. J. Muller, or both, to write about a positive program in eugenics that they have strongly advocated. For what may be to some extent a counter view, or a critique of their proposals, one might ask, perhaps outstandingly, Professor Dobzhansky at the Rockefeller Institute. I would be happy to participate myself in a particular way, which is to stress not so much the criticism of eugenics that I might undertake, but rather the challenges and perspectives of euphenics (a term you may recognize if you recall the Ciba Symposium). Since I have nothing to advocate here except a close examination of the problems, I feel that to put this in an adversary context may be misleading. Perhaps Beadle would be willing to serve as a referee, though I imagine his duties at Chicago leave him rather little time for scholarly activity. Crow or Bentley Glass could do this end of the job very well too.

I hope this comment may be of some use to you. Let me say no more until I have heard how it strikes you.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

PREECE W. E.